FOREIGN COMMERCE

Foreign commerce continued, both by the overland routes and by way of the ports on the south coast. Trade by the overland routes was probably often interrupted or hampered by war, but we have already seen that the Northern Wei extended its power to the extreme West of what is now the New Dominion and that the silk trade appears to have been maintained. Of the southern ports, those in Tongking, on the delta of the Red River, were earlier of chief importance, but Canton was growing as a rival,

Chinese merchants seem not to have ventured very far afield and to have left chiefly to strangers the initiative in foreign trade, but outsiders found China a profitable country with which to deal,

Now and again we obtain glimpses of this foreign commerce or its concomitants which show us something of its extent. In 226 a merchant from the Grseco-Roman Orient—Ta Ch'in—arrived via Tongking at the court of the state of Wu. Other merchants from Western Asia are reported to have come in fairly large numbers to what is now Indo-China and even to Canton. Sun Ch'iian, the first Wu Emperor, made at least two attempts to get in touch with the outer world, the first through an official whom he started back with the merchant from Ta Ch'in, but who died on the way, and the other through representatives whom he sent to the countries to the south. In 433 an embassy reached China from a state in the South—either from Java or from the Malay Peninsula. Beginning with the latter part of the third century, the kings of Champa, just to the south of the Chinese domains in Indo-China, began sending envoys.

Some of these rulers, indeed, recognized Chinese suzerainty, although others did not scruple to invade the adjoining imperial domains. Embassies, too, are said to have arrived from Ceylon and India to the Liu Sung court to congratulate it on the progress of Buddhism in its domains. The large number of Buddhist missionaries in China who came by sea probably indicates a fairly extensive ocean shipping. Toward the latter part of this era, Justinian (527-565) of the Byzantine Empire attempted to open a new route to the Far East which would avoid the domains of his enemies, the Sassanids. Sericulture reached Khotan from China early in the fifth century. The cultivated walnut seems to have been in-